

ARTICLE REFERRED
ON PAGE 15CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
4 April 1986

Book review

Spy fiction

How to seed a bloodless revolution in the USSR

By Jane Stewart Spitzer

IMAGINE an almost bloodless coup carried out by high-ranking members of the Soviet Army that ousts the Communist Party from power and creates a new government in the Soviet Union.

This is the premise of "Moscow Rules" (Random House, \$16.45; Pocket Books, \$3.50), a novel by Robert Moss, a respected authority on Soviet-American relations. Recently Mr. Moss shared his thoughts with the Monitor on his latest book, on the Soviet position in Afghanistan, and on Vitaly Yurchenko, the Russian defector who returned to the Soviet Union.

Moss was one of the first to document Soviet connections with the Palestine Liberation Organization and Western European terrorist groups, and the first to charge (to the US Senate in 1981) that the Bulgarians were involved in the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II. He has also been working on what he says will be a definitive history of the KGB.

Moss, who has not been allowed inside the Soviet bloc for more than nine years, gathered most of the information on the Soviet Union for "Moscow Rules" through thousands of hours of interviews with Soviet defectors, including former officers of the KGB and Soviet military intelligence.

The premise of "Moscow Rules" — changing the Soviet system from within — is fascinating. The hero of the book, Sasha Preobrazhensky, is determined to change the system that caused the murder of his father, a World War II hero, by a man who is now a high-ranking KGB officer. Sasha joins the army, serves as a military intelligence officer at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations, and fights in Afghanistan. He returns to Moscow to take a

high-level job with the Army General Staff, a position from which he can plan and carry out a military coup that will oust the Communist Party and create a new government in the Soviet Union.

"Whether Sasha's kind of revolution is possible is entirely debatable," says the smartly-dressed author. "However, if change is going to come in the Soviet Union, it will come from the top, and it will come virtually without warning."

Moss says he knows people like Sasha, defectors who had to get out of the Soviet Union, some of whom he describes as genuine patriots who would have preferred to remain and try to change the system from within.

Sasha's mixture of traditional Russian nationalism with a slightly more sophisticated, Westernized attitude toward world affairs is, in Moss's opinion, typical of honorable men who exist at middle and junior levels in the army and even in the KGB. "Unfortunately," Moss explains, "by the time you've got to the top of the Soviet system you've been through so many loyalty screenings and so much accommodation with the party and the system it's unlikely that you're going to be a reformer."

Sasha, however, manages to retain some of his values and his idealism. He hides his "private agenda" behind a façade. He deceives people, including people very close to him, which Moss claims is the way to get ahead in the Soviet Union if you have a private agenda. Sasha's secret meetings with his fellow conspirators in Moscow are realistic, Moss confirms. "There are chinks in the system," he says. "But the way to change things is not to go out on the street and have a demonstration. Those people are brave, but they're foolish. The way to do it is to adapt to the system on the surface and work from within."

"The one thing happening in real life that is really the central concept of 'Moscow Rules' is the increasing power of the Soviet military," Moss continues. "I think the Soviet armed forces today are more powerful in political terms than at any time since the Bolshevik Revolution." He thinks the experience of fighting in Afghanistan and dealing with the top-heavy Soviet bureaucracy could propel the military into being more assertive with the party leadership. He also believes that eventually Afghanistan will be incorporated into the USSR as one or more autonomous republics. He sees very strong circumstantial evidence for that, because the Soviets are deporting Afghan children for schooling in the Soviet Union. "Basically," he says, "they are training a new generation of Russian-speaking, loyal Marxist-Leninist Afghans who will go back in 10 or 20 years' time as the new leadership of the country."

Although Moss was not allowed to meet defector Vitaly Yurchenko — who, according to some recent reports, after his return to the USSR has been executed by the government — he believes that Yurchenko "was quite possibly a KGB plant sent to counter the earlier defection of [Oleg] Gordievsky to the British. Gordievsky, on the available evidence, is the biggest catch the West has ever had in terms of a serving KGB officer. He must have brought invaluable information. The almost instant defection of a second very senior KGB officer is inevitably suspect."

"The Yurchenko story, in all its twists and turns, surpasses by far the average spy thriller. The real world is absolutely fascinating in this respect, which is why I have tried in writing my espionage novels to ground them on realities and not to be purely escapist, because the realities are not only more interesting, they're more exciting." ■